



NASA Astrobiology Institute

Focus Groups

Purpose: To mobilize expertise from across the Institute and the wider scientific community towards the rapid advancement of a defined area of research, mission planning, or other activity of particular importance to astrobiology. Innovative, interdisciplinary efforts seeking synergy among various research fields are particularly encouraged.

Membership: Although significant representation by members of the NAI is expected, both the general membership and the position of Chair are open to individuals not otherwise associated with the Institute.

Proposal Development: A written proposal is to be submitted to the NAI Deputy Director which addresses the following aspects of the proposed Focus Group; 1) brief background and purpose, 2) proposed activities, 3) approximate schedule, 4) expected results or products, and 5) a section emphasizing relevance to the Astrobiology Roadmap and potential impact on space missions and Astrobiology technology development. The entire proposal is expected to be on the order of 5-8 pages, and should include a requested period of approval up to three years. Note that there is no budget section in the initial proposal, but that requests for funding support may be submitted once the group has been approved. The development of proposals for external competitive funding is also encouraged.

Approval: The written proposal is first distributed to the NAI Executive Council (EC) for review, followed by a presentation of the proposal which is to take place only at in-person meetings of the EC, unless exigent circumstances exist and the Council agrees to an alternate voting circumstance. A decision regarding approval is made by the Director based on the recommendations of the EC, and the successful completion of any requested revisions.

Products and Reporting: The products which are expected to result from a Focus Group's activities will depend on its purpose and nature. These could include items such as research publications, white papers, course curricula, or workshop reports. The type and approximate schedule of products which are planned to result from a Focus Group are to be included in the original proposal. In addition, NAI Focus Groups are expected to provide reports for, and contribute material to, the NAI Annual Science Report, the NAI General Meetings, and the development of the NAI website. All Focus Groups are required to submit a Final Report upon conclusion of their period of approval.

Renewal: Focus Groups are eligible for renewal upon completion of their approved duration. A proposal describing the continuing activities is to be submitted to the Deputy Director following the format for an initial proposal, to include a discussion of why continuation would be valuable. The process for review and approval is the same as for an initial proposal. If renewing, the Final Report can be combined and submitted with the renewal proposal.